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INDEPENDENCE OF THE CUBAN REPUBLIC.

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SPEECH

OF

HON. HUGH A. DINSMORE,

OF ARKANSAS,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

APRIL 13, 1898.

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WASHINGTON.

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SPEECH  
OF  
HON. HUGH A. DINSMORE.

The SPEAKER. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. ADAMS] upon the resolution which will be read.

The Clerk read as follows:

*Resolved*, That the President is hereby authorized and directed to intervene at once to stop the war in Cuba, to the end and with the purpose of securing permanent peace and order there and establishing by the free action of the people thereof a stable and independent government of their own in the Island of Cuba; and the President is hereby authorized and empowered to use the land and naval forces of the United States to execute the purpose of this resolution.

Mr. ADAMS. For the purpose of permitting the gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. BERRY] to offer the minority resolution, I yield to him, reserving my rights.

Mr. BERRY. I offer as a substitute the minority report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The SPEAKER. The gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. BERRY] offers as a substitute the resolution which will be read.

The Clerk read as follows:

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled*, That the United States Government hereby recognizes the independence of the Republic of Cuba.

SEC. 2. That, moved thereto by many considerations of humanity, of interest, and of provocation, among which are the deliberate mooring of our battleship, the *Maine*, over a submarine mine and its destruction in the harbor of Havana, the President of the United States be, and he is hereby, directed to employ immediately the land and naval forces of the United States in aiding the Republic of Cuba to maintain the independence hereby recognized.

SEC. 3. That the President of the United States is hereby authorized and directed to extend immediate relief to the starving people of Cuba.

Mr. DINSMORE. Mr. Speaker, as there seems to be no other method of getting the views of the minority before the House in the report submitted by them, I desire to read for the information of this body, in my own time, what they have presented on this occasion.

REPORT.

We, the undersigned members of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives, having considered the message of the President of the United States, which was transmitted to Congress on Monday, April 11, 1898, and referred to said committee, submit the following report to the House of Representatives:

We recommend the following resolutions as a substitute for the resolutions submitted by the majority of the Committee on Foreign Affairs:

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled*, That the United States Government hereby recognizes the independence of the Republic of Cuba.

SEC. 2. That, moved thereto by many considerations of humanity, of interest, and of provocation, among which are the deliberate mooring of our

battle ship, the *Maine*, over a submarine mine and its destruction in the harbor of Havana, the President of the United States be, and he is hereby, directed to employ immediately the land and naval forces of the United States in aiding the Republic of Cuba to maintain the independence hereby recognized.

"Sec. 3. That the President of the United States is hereby authorized and directed to extend immediate relief to the starving people of Cuba."

In support of the first resolution, guided by motives of humanity and of interest, influenced by divers provocations, among which are the deliberate mooring of our battle ship, the *Maine*, over a submarine mine, its ruthless destruction in the harbor of Havana, and the death of 236 seamen, we submit the facts to the House, to our countrymen, and to the world.

For more than a quarter of a century, with short intervals, a revolution has been in progress in Cuba, destroying our commerce and causing great financial loss to our citizens and unprecedented mortality among the contending factions.

For more than three years the Cuban patriots have struggled for freedom with courage, fortitude, and self-abnegation unexcelled in the annals of the human race. These people are our near neighbors, closely connected with us by ties of business and of friendship. In their aspirations for liberty they have been animated by our example and have modeled their form of government upon ours.

During these three years the Spaniards have butchered these people, starved helpless women, children, and old men by hundreds of thousands, and have wasted the island by fire and sword in violation of all the rules of civilized warfare. These acts of barbarous cruelty have filled the American people with horror, and they are practically unanimous in favor of recognizing the independence of the government established by that brave and heroic people by the expenditure of so much treasure and so much blood, and our people will be satisfied with nothing less.

The government which the Cubans have established has all the forms of a republic, and is a republic in fact, based on manhood suffrage, with legislative and executive departments in full operation, and with a judicial department so far perfect as the exigencies of the situation permit.

They levy and collect taxes, disburse large sums of money, conduct a postal system, maintain an army of 30,000 men in the field, have defended themselves successfully against 225,000 Spanish soldiers, 135,000 of whom are in hospitals or in their graves, and are now in undisputed possession of three-fourths of the island. Outside her picket lines Spain possesses not one foot of Cuban soil. Within her picket lines three-fourths of the population are insurgents at heart, who will cordially participate in the republican government as soon as the Spaniards evacuate the island.

With these facts staring us in the face, we must realize that Spain can never conquer Cuba, and that ultimately we must recognize the independence of the Cuban Republic. This being the case, the sooner we act the better for all concerned, thereby putting an end to the sacrifice of human life and the destruction of property.

We urge the unequivocal recognition of the independence of the Cuban Republic, because the Cuban patriots merit such recognition by their valor and prove it in arms; because recognition is the plain, honest, courageous, manly course, and will remove from the minds of all men any suspicion that we are preparing to wage a war of conquest and to annex the island from motives of sordid greed, or as the beginning of a policy of imperial aggrandizement. We urge the recognition of the existing republic, because, under international law, only an existing government can be recognized, and because by recognizing the present republic we lift from the minds of the Cuban patriots the fear that we will force upon them a government which they do not want; we urge it because without such recognition, in the event of war between Spain and the American Republic, it would be a war against Cuba also, for until the recognition of her independence she is, in the contemplation of international law, still a part of Spain.

Recognizing the independence of their republic will give the Cubans credit among the nations of the earth, thereby enabling them to use all their resources to the utmost, and will influence men of other countries to reinforce the Cubans with the assurance that they will be treated as soldiers and will not be hanged as traitors, filibusters, or pirates in the event of capture.

We urge the passage of the second resolution, providing for armed intervention, as a necessary and logical sequence to the recognition of the independence of the Cuban Republic.

Facts must be considered as they actually exist, not as we would have them, and one of the most potent and patent facts of the situation is that Spain refuses to realize what all the rest of the world knows to be true, that Cuba has passed from her control forever. This being the case, she will hold on with the strength of despair to fragments of the island as long as possible, thereby perpetuating the process of starvation, arson, and extermination

wherever she can, and by occasional forays ravaging the country adjacent to her garrisons and stockades. We have no doubt that our simple recognition of the Republic of Cuba would enable the Cubans themselves to ultimately expel the Spaniards from every portion of the island.

Armed intervention on our part would end the agony of this brave people, save thousands of them from death, and speedily close the most disgraceful chapter in the history of the Western Hemisphere. We owe this duty to ourselves no less than to the Cubans.

We recommend the adoption of the third resolution, to feed the famished Cubans, as an act of mercy and humanity.

HUGH A. DINSMORE.  
FRANCIS G. NEWLANDS.  
CHAMP CLARK.  
JOHN S. WILLIAMS.  
A. S. BERRY.  
WM. M. HOWARD.

Mr. Speaker, I regret as much as any gentleman on this floor can regret the manifestation of partisanship that has transpired here this afternoon during these proceedings. It appears to me, sir, that if there was ever a period in the history of this Government that calls for statesmanship, when patriotic dignity should have characterized our conduct, and partisanship should have been subordinated to statesmanship, that period is now. [Prolonged applause on the Democratic side.]

We are confronted by the most critical situation witnessed in very many years by the people of the United States. Our people have long recognized that this point would ultimately be reached, unless those who represented the people in the Congress of the United States performed their full duty and took the courageous stand dictated by prudence and statesmanship and common sense. [Applause.]

As has been well said by my friend from Tennessee [Mr. McMILLIN], it has been and is now my conviction that if we had done our duty, if we had taken this position a year ago, this matter would have been settled, Cuba would have been free, and the sailors of the *Maine*, who sleep now in a watery grave, would have been alive to bear their arms and carry to victory the flag of our country. [Applause.] Throughout all of the history of the Government Spanish civilization on the American continent has been a menace to us and to our institutions. Throughout the whole history of our past it has presented to us great embarrassment and difficult problems with which we had to deal.

In all the various Spanish settlements and colonies on this continent we have had the same perplexing problems that we have met with and are meeting now. We have taken those colonies by the hand in the past and inducted them into the glorious field of statehood. And so again to-day, after all of these years of Spain's government of Cuba, with the patriots struggling for liberty and to protect themselves from oppression, with courage and heroic devotion to the cause of liberty, we extend our hands to them who for thirty years have fought Spanish oppression, Spanish brutality, Spanish butchery, and Spanish wrong. [Prolonged applause.]

Now, Mr. Speaker, we do not say to them to-day—I speak now for my colleagues on this side of the House—we do not say to the people who for years past in an unequal fight, have been compelled to see their wives and children suffer and starve in the cause of liberty, we do not say we are coming with an army into your territory to establish a government which in our judgment will be a “stable government,” which will be a possible government and a peaceful government. “We shall give you permanent peace, but

we must judge of the permanency of that peace ourselves, and we must judge of the stability of that government."

We say not that to them. But we present a very different proposal in the views submitted by my colleagues and myself. We say to them we recognize the fact that you have an organized government, a constitution, a cabinet, officers duly appointed, the revenues being collected in the territory that you occupy, and we are not going to force upon you a government that may be a "carpet-bag" government, run by somebody else outside of your own dominion. [Applause.] But we propose to give you a representative government of your own people, by yourselves, by officials chosen in your own way. [Prolonged applause.]

There are many reasons. Mr. Speaker, why we should do so. You can not recognize a people. A people, except in an organized capacity, is not recognizable in an international way, but when organized into a government we may rationally and properly acknowledge them as a free and independent government. But, sir, the people of Cuba, when we do recognize them in that way, acquire some benefits to themselves, and the government which they represent, and they will not of necessity be considered as enemies of the United States in case war shall be declared by the United States against Spain.

What are they now? Are they Cuban belligerents? Have you ever acknowledged that they were? What are they now? Are they citizens of a republic? By what action of the American Government have they ever been recognized as such? To-day in international view they can only be considered as Spanish subjects, and when the armies of the United States go down to Cuba to meet the Spanish forces, they go there to war upon Spain as represented by her soldiers there and her subjects in Cuba, who are the Cubans themselves.

This, Mr. Speaker, is cruel. This is not in accordance with the sentiments which have characterized the expressions of gentlemen in this House for so many days, so many weeks, and so many months that we have been here. We talk about liberty. Then, let us give to the Cubans liberty. [Applause on the Democratic side.] We talk about freedom. Let us give to them the right to establish a government which they think will be a free government, and which does not reserve to us, the Government of the United States, the right to say, after it is established, "Ah, this is not a 'stable' government; we can not turn it over to you yet; we must look after this thing."

And, again, Mr. Speaker, there are questions of debt to be considered. There are questions of bonds. I do not accuse the gentlemen opposing me of having this in view and of desiring to make our Government liable for those bonds. I only mention this as a possibility.

I understand it was stated by Senator FORAKER in the Senate to-day, asserted as a fact, of international law, and I have thought myself all along that there were substantial grounds on which to base such an opinion, that in case we intervene in Cuba, without giving recognition to the government which there exists, we thereby become responsible for the payment of the Spanish bonds which have been floated on the credit of the revenues of Cuba and which are hypothecated upon those revenues. Shall we do this? Gentlemen of the majority, meet us upon the grounds contained in our resolution!



We heard the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. GROSVENOR] say the other day that Cuban independence was going to be recognized. Cuban independence! There can be no Cuban independence except in the independence of its government in the hands of its own officials. [Applause on the Democratic side.]

But the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. GROSVENOR], being the friend of the President and supposed to voice his sentiments, says that the President of the United States is in favor of the independence of Cuba. Did he demand of Spain the independence of Cuba? Oh, no; we were made to believe so, but he did not. His minister told the Spanish cabinet that the President did not demand independence. His Attorney-General, it seems, thought that "stable" was the diplomatic word for independence, and in his message to Congress the President, to be consistent with his demands upon Spain, only asks that a stable government be given to the Cubans. Oh, the pity of it! Oh, the humiliation to all true Americans! Long and anxiously in this House have we waited for some message or expression from the President of the United States conveying to our anxious ears the glad news that he believed in the independence of Cuba. When did it come? He sent us the message which was read in the hearing of all the members of this House. Notwithstanding the statements which have been made in trying to bolster up that document since, you all know how it fell like a wet blanket upon that side of the House, upon the patriotic men over there whose hearts bled for the suffering Cubans, struggling for the liberties that every American believes every God-born individual has a right to possess.

Mr. Speaker, I, for one, have become convinced by deliberate consideration of the testimony brought before a legally-constituted naval court, composed of officers who have honored commissions, who have been honored by commissions of the United States Government—without going into details, for that time is not permitted to me—I believe that the *Maine* disaster was the result of deliberate official action of the Spaniards. [Applause.]

Not that Blanco knew it, not that he ordered it, but that it must of necessity inevitably have been done by some official of the Spanish Government familiar with and having the secrets of the submarine mines deposited there for the protection of that harbor.

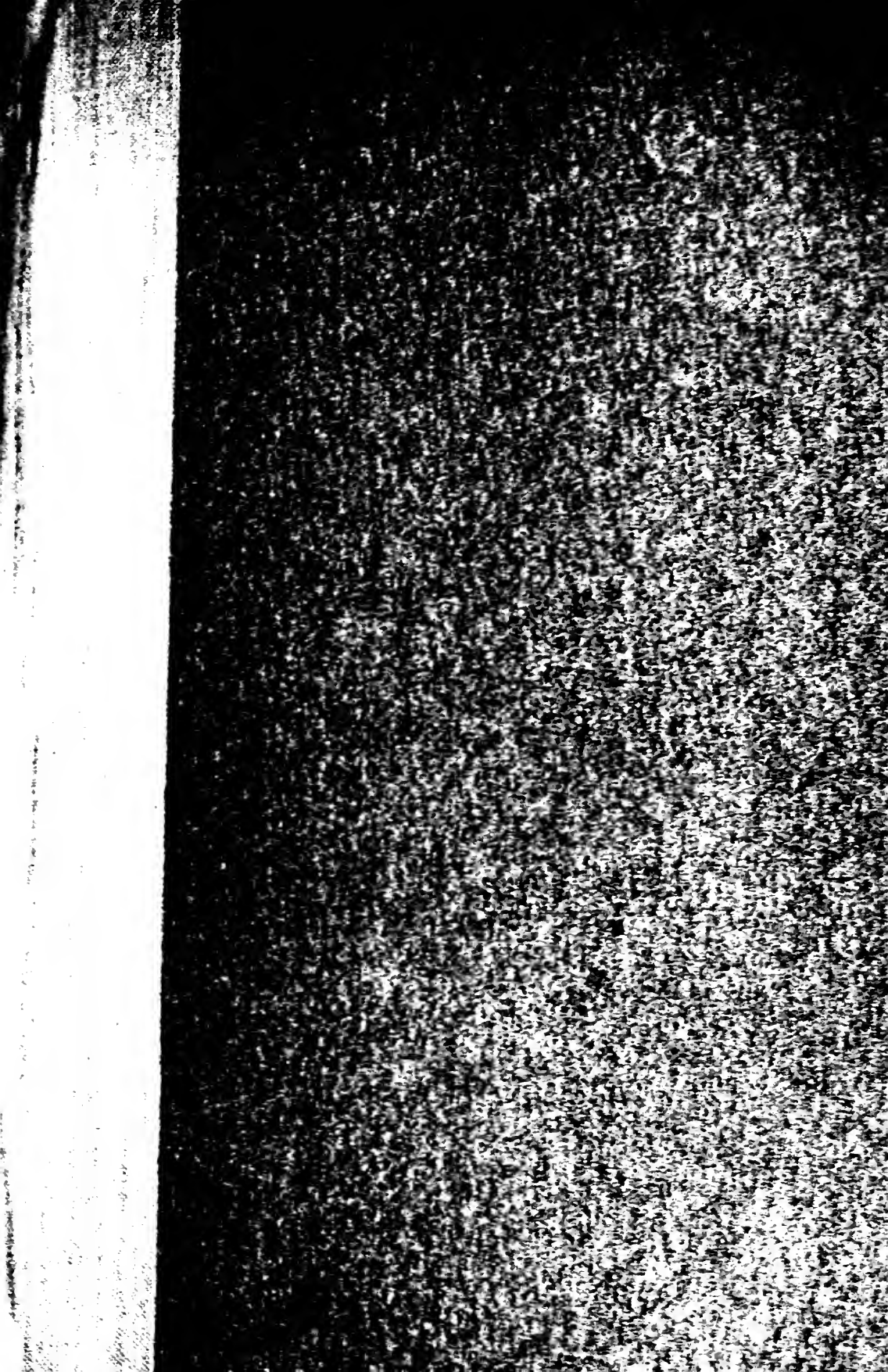
Now, Sir, in conclusion, the grave responsibilities of this situation are to be discharged by every member in the House in accordance with the allegiance and the duty which he owes to his own country and his own flag. We ought to do that which would be an honor to the American colors, because if we impose a wrong on Cuba it redounds to the dishonor of our own Republic. Our people have become irresistible in their demands for the action of this body, else we all know that this action could never have been brought about.

We offer to you and to the country our substitute for your resolution, and appeal to the wisdom, patriotism, and judgment of our fellow-citizens, and for the rectitude of our intentions, the integrity of our purpose, the justice of our position, to that higher court which must pass upon the actions of all men and all nations.

Our fathers' God, from out whose hand  
The centuries fall like grains of sand

[Loud applause.]





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